

HORSES – SAFE HANDLING TIPS

Approaching a horse

- A horse's vision is restricted directly in the front and to the rear, but its hearing is acute. Always speak to a horse as you approach it. Failure to do so may startle the horse and cause it to kick you.
- Always approach at an angle, never directly from the front or rear. Speak to the horse, let him know you are there.
- Pet a horse by first rubbing a hand on its shoulder or neck. Don't "dab" at the end of a horse's nose.
- Always walk around a horse out of kicking range or walk close to the horse with contact. Never walk under or step over the tie rope. Handling
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Handling

- Be calm and confident around horses. A nervous handler causes a nervous, unsafe horse.
- While you work, stay close to the horse so that if it kicks, you will not receive the full impact of the kick. Try to stay out of kicking range whenever possible. When you go to the opposite side of a horse, move away from the rear of the horse and go around it, out of kicking range.
- Know your horse, its temperament and reactions. Let it know you are its firm and kind master. Control your temper at all times.
- Always let a horse know what you intend to do. When you pick up a foot, for example, do not grab the foot hurriedly. This will startle the horse and may cause it to kick. Learn the proper way to lift feet (see figures 25-28).
- When you work around a horse, the safest method is to tie or hold the head. • Work around a horse from a position as near the shoulder as possible.
- Never stand directly behind a horse to work with its tail. Stand off to the side, near the point of the buttock, facing the rear. Grasp the tail and draw it around to you.
- A good equestrian will keep in balance at all times. An accidental slip or stumble can result in unintentional injury by the horse.
- Do not drop grooming tools on the ground near the horse. Place them where they will not be stepped on by the horse or cause you to trip.
- Know the horse's peculiarities. If someone else rides your horse, tell him or her what to expect.
- Teasing a horse may cause it to develop dangerous habits for the rest of its life and put your safety, and the horse's, in serious jeopardy.
- Punish a horse only at the instant of its disobedience. If you wait, even for a minute, it will not understand why it is being punished. Punish without anger. Never strike a horse about its head.
- Wear footwear that will protect your feet from being stepped on or from stepping on nails around the stable and barnyard. Riding boots are best. Never go barefooted.

Leading

- Make the horse walk beside you, not run ahead or lag behind, when leading. A position even with the horse's head or halfway between the horse's head and its shoulder is safest. When changing direction, it is safer to turn the horse to the right and walk around it.
- Use a long lead strap and fold the excess strap in a figure-eight style in your left hand when leading. It is customary to lead from the horse's left, or near side, by using the right hand to hold the lead near the halter. Extend your right elbow slightly toward the horse. If the horse makes contact with you, its shoulder will hit your elbow first and move you away from it. Your elbow also can be used on the horse's neck to keep its head and neck straight and controlled, and to prevent the horse from crowding you. Train the horse to be led from both sides.
- Your horse is larger and stronger than you. If it resists, do not get in front of it and try to pull. (See Figure 34 for more information on safe areas.)
- Never wrap the lead strap, halter shank or reins around your hand, wrist or body. A knot at the end of the lead shank aids in maintaining a secure hand grip when needed for control.
- When leading, tying or untying a horse, avoid getting your hands or fingers entangled. Use caution to prevent catching a finger in dangerous positions such as in halter and bridle hardware that includes snaps, bits, rings and loops.
- Be extremely cautious when leading a horse through narrow openings such as a door. Be certain you have firm control and step through first. Step through quickly and get to one side to avoid being crowded.
- Any time you are dismounted or leading the horse, the stirrup irons on an English saddle should be run up or dressed (slip the stirrups up the leathers). Also, be cautious of stirrups catching on objects when using a western saddle.
- Use judgment when turning a horse loose. It generally is safest to lead a horse completely through the gate or door and turn the horse about, facing the direction from which you just entered. Then release the lead strap or remove the halter or bridle. Make the horse stand quietly while you pet it. Avoid letting a horse bolt away from you when released. Good habits prevent accidents.
- Avoid use of excessively long lead ropes which can become accidentally entangled. Watch the coils when using lariats or lunge lines.